



# AVMA Model Veterinary Practice Act

## Association of Pet Dog Trainers Position Statement

There has been concern regarding the recently introduced AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) Model Veterinary Practice Act draft (revision dated December 23, 2002). Under the definition of "practice of veterinary medicine" the "diagnosing and treatment of mental conditions" is listed as being part of the practice of veterinary medicine.

The concern with this wording is that the term "mental conditions" may be construed to mean any and all behavior problems and could place our member's practices under the legal definition of a veterinary practice. If that were to happen, we as dog trainers, would not be legally allowed to continue in our chosen profession.

To this end, the APDT Legislative Action Committee, APDT Executive Director CJ Bentley, the APDT board of directors and the APDT Think Tank worked together to address these concerns with the AVMA. The following is the letter that the APDT has sent to the AVMA.

March 11, 2003  
Dr. Beth Sabin  
AVMA  
1931 N Meacham Rd, Suite 100  
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360

Dear Dr. Sabin,

This correspondence is in reference to the AVMA Model Veterinary Practice Act draft revision dated December 23, 2002. I would like to thank and express our appreciation to the AVMA for allowing us the opportunity to express our viewpoints. Please consider the following concerns and proposal from the Association of Pet Dog Trainers regarding this document.

Our goal is to separate the practice of dog training and behavior modification from the regulations that govern veterinary medicine.

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) is an international, non-profit, professional trade organization of dog trainers, behaviorists and other animal professionals, with more than 4,200

members worldwide. Our primary purpose is the education of dog trainers, the public and the veterinary profession regarding canine behavior and training and the benefits of dog-friendly behavior and training. One of our primary goals is to forge successful partnerships between trainers and veterinarians for the benefit of dogs and their owners. In 2001 the APDT introduced the first nationally recognized certification/testing for pet dog trainers, designed to *standardize the definition of a certified pet dog trainer who agrees to and abides by the APDT mission statement and APDT Ethics Statement*. Enclosed, please find a description of the APDT, our vision statement, mission statement and code of ethics.

Many of our members, as a function of their business, routinely treat behavioral issues and have been uniquely trained to do so. In some cases they have been in business for many years in this specialized area. Our concern regarding the Model Veterinary Practice Act is the inclusion of the term "mental conditions" within the definition of "practice of veterinary medicine" (Section 2 - Definitions). We are concerned that this term may be construed to mean any and all behavior problems and could place our member's practices under the legal definition of a veterinary practice.

We are proposing that an exemption be added to *Section 6 - Exemptions* to further clarify "mental conditions." Our goal is to separate the practice of dog training and behavior modification from the regulations that govern veterinary medicine. We also realize that the practice of prescribing and the dispensing of veterinary drugs and traditional veterinary medical procedures should remain within the practice of veterinary medicine. The exemption we are proposing is as follows:

### **Section 6 - Exemptions**

This act shall not be construed to prohibit:

X) Animal trainers who – as a function of their professional practice – prevent, identify and provide appropriate training or behavioral interventions for problem animal behaviors including, but not limited to aggression, compulsion, fear, anxiety and inappropriate elimination arising from a variety of psychological, environmental and animal-management deficits; not to include the prescribing or dispensing of veterinary drugs or the practice of traditional veterinary medical procedures.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you wish to discuss this suggestion further, or require any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact:

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Association of Pet Dog Trainers  
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